

# **PERSONALIZATION OF THE DWELLING -**

**A STUDY OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GENERIC FORM,  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RE-FORMING OF HOUSES  
FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY FLOOD  
IN BADDEGAMA, GALLE DISTRICT**

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## **A Dissertation**

**Submitted to The Department of Architecture of the  
University of Moratuwa in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of**

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**In**

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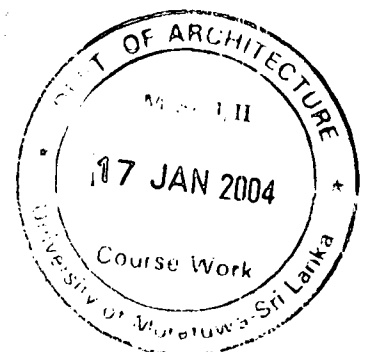
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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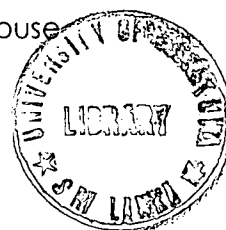
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### **A STUDY OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GENERIC FORM, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RE-FORMING OF HOUSES FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY FLOOD IN BADDEGAMA, GALLE DISTRICT**

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**P R E A M B L E**

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## **PREAMBLE**

Over many thousands of years, human societies have tackled the basic problem of providing shelter in a wide variety of ways, adapting to the natural environment and making use of the materials it provides for the construction (or adaptation) of sheltered space. The most basic motive for building has been to provide shelter for a defined Kinship group, often within a clearly marked, protected area.

The shelter always had two purposes. That is qualitative aspect and the quantitative aspects. Privacy, Identity,<sup>o</sup> Territoriality and Sense of belongingness are considered as some of those qualitative aspects of a shelter. The meaning of shelter varies from, the single housing unit to a settlement which is the manifestation of self to community level.

As a result of social hierarchies, cultural beliefs, and economic and political aspirations, such communities being segregated and that has resulted in so many settlement patterns within one community itself. The settlement patterns exist, as a result of **socio-spatial** organizations which co-existed within a society, and to establish one's reaction to a **specific place**, which one refers to. When someone become place or location specific, he has to be in a two-way conversation with the particular place, in order to make his roots to that place.

Human, place relationships carry **opportunities** as well as **threats** to its inhabitants, which some may be avoidable or unavoidable. Opportunities, no doubt, may result for the upliftment of a society. But threats would come in the guise of natural and man-made disasters, which cause numerous harm to the society.

Most instances "**displacement**" being the ultimate result of a disaster, it uproots people from their original places, with severe physical, social and



psychological losses, which may reflect throughout many generations. This losses, the very communal base of a society and make them placeless. Even though, these threats does occur changes, long term or short term, in the society, but the society has to exist some how, somewhere in the world. Also life has to be continued. To keep this process in motion people **"re-built"** and **"re-place"** themselves either in the same locality or in a nearby area. By doing so, people generally **"re-align"** themselves for the continuous process of place making.

Nevertheless, the act of dwelling may happen, based on social, cultural, political and economical aspects, in varying degrees. To understand these varying aspects, one has to have a deeper understanding and experience regarding certain characteristics of a particular society.

This study thus, unravels the spatial experiences of the individuals and in communal level, in their re-making or re-forming of places, after being suddenly displaced by different disaster situations.



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## DECLARATION

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this university or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signed: .....  .....

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## INTRODUCTION

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## ➤ THE STUDY PREMISE

**Human is a social animal.** So it creates inter-relationships between, the living and the non-living things together. Existence of these inter-relationships facilitates the **"act of living"**. In this scenario **'home'** becomes the primarily enabling space, which facilitate this process. **"Home"** as a purposeful human creation of spaces gives meaning to architecture. **HOME, therefore as a work of Architecture concretises socio-spatial relationships.**

"Home" as the basic social entity, which facilitate social relationships, act as the central place of human existence. Man is deeply rooted to this centre and it reflects all the things known in contrast to the unknown world around him. These deep existential ties of "home" provide man mental comfort in terms of sense of belongingness, identity, territoriality, orientation, privacy security and personalization. So it is psychologically hard to detach from home within a short time. Home as the core of this kind of place attachment a person can psychologically **"resides"** rather than physically, because it becomes the starting point in our daily routine. Therefore the house fulfils the psychological, physical, socio-cultural needs of the family.

The concept of home is a universal language representing archetypes and symbols, common to all human society. But the form of the dwelling, throughout the world differs largely, in relation to the uniqueness of a specific location or country/ region. It results a location specific architecture, which is composed and manifested through a generic form for the dwelling.

This ongoing process of human habitation, act of dwelling and the continuous social relationships embedded deep inside, will get shattered and destroyed due to catastrophic situations. It will result **sudden displacement** and refugees

are connected to detachment to home, which **cannot be under-estimated or under-valued.**

Ultimate result of displacement is known as **placelessness**. Placelessness refers to an occasion which all its socio-spatial relationships and references for places being lost. Loosing one's point of reference in the world, not only in its physical construction, also the social and psychological attachment to place, make the situation more critical.

So the solution has to be a **multi disciplinary approach** regarding a purposeful re-orientation, which address all issues of place making in Architecture.

The initial observation is that, the depth of this problem not been envisaged by people who are responsible, including professionals in all fields related to architecture. Unsuccessful instant solutions are introduced without analysing the needs & expectations of the threatened people.

The key observation in this situation is the use of type plans being the general practice in the process of **re-structuring, re-aligning or re-placing** the displaced people due to any reason. The level of personalization which is a determinant factor in re-orientation, is neglected in most situations when providing dwellings, for the physically and mentally distressed people who need to **re-fabricate** their "**webs of life**" quickly to enable their act of dwelling.

## ➤ THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

As it is discussed, disasters like flood, landslides, earthquakes, war & civil conflicts can cause instant displacements.

This may demand an instant supply of spaces where people can easily re-orientate. In such situations the supply of houses for displaced people who are placeless been a special task in the act of dwelling.

In case of placelessness all spatial orientations and rootings will come to an end and necessity of the act of re-forming and re-orientation becomes vital. To facilitate such an act, an architect as the prime place maker, has a greater responsibility.



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**Place making is not merely an object making exercise.** But most of the reconstruction of dwellings, neighbourhoods & settlements are done as "object making" in a vast scale by ignoring the essential importance of place making. The importance of this issue becomes more sharpened when it is connected with disaster situations, because it is a challenge to provide "Places and Dwellings" for displaced.

At the moment, though this seems to be a problematic situation, reconstruction does not provide the kind of "dwellings" they had cherished as the part of their life in the new location to improve the existing opportunities and to up-lift the quality of life. In this scenario it comes the importance of the architect above the engineer, planner or sociologists, as the only professional, who can combine other professionals together throughout this multi-disciplinary exercise.

Architecture of a region can be changed due to several factors such as socio-economic, cultural, political, environmental and technological. So each region should have a pertinent generic form with variations or options depending on the contributory factors. This pertinent generic form may create an outer frame for a particular architectural character, which may be personalized by the inhabitants on their personal aspirations.

The importance of the study is that, personalization becomes the determinant factor in transforming the generic form in to differentiated personal dwelling units, with facilitating all other psychological attributes such as territoriality, privacy, orientation, sense of belongingness, identity, etc... of an enabling place.





## ➤ INTENTION OF THE STUDY

**The intention of the study is to establish the importance of personalization and the degree of architects involvement needed in the re-construction process for the internally displaced people, due to disaster situation.**

Home is the most personalized unit of human habitation. It concretises all kinds of socio-spatial relationships and reflects the desires, aspirations and psyche perceptions deeply rooted inside the inhabitants. So one intention of this particular study is to **discuss the importance of act of dwelling and the physical, psychological and socio-cultural attributes regarding attachment to home place.**



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The event of disaster makes people loose their "homes" and "places", and not mere buildings. And it will detach people from their rooting places and reference points and make them disoriented and disjointed, in the unknown world. **Therefore to establish the criticality of the issue of displacement and placelessness due to catastrophic situation is another intention of this study.**

An energetic solution is needed through architecture, which strengthens the ego, sustain life and empower the individual family unit of the displaced people. So the intention is to **discuss the need for a meaningful reconstruction process, which re-orientate and re-fabricate the "webs of life" of the homeless.** And the common re-construction methods such as type plan and core house solutions and their contribution to establish and re-establish the lost attitudes, are taken in to discussion.

But the main intention will be to establish the importance of personalization in the process of reconstruction of homes for the mentally and physically

distressed people, and to examine the degree of personalization in past and on-going reconstruction approaches. **To conduct a detail discussion about the "generic form solution" as a recently experimented re-construction method and its contribution to transform the generic form to differentiated personal dwelling units is another intention of this study. As well as the results, merits and weaknesses of the "generic form solution" in comparison to other commonly used re-construction methods are discussed, with the intention to apply a more meaningful and successful result oriented method in the future situations.**



## ➤ **METHOD OF THE STUDY**

The subject area of the study, comprise of "**dwelling**", "**act of dwelling**", and "**personalization of generic form of the dwelling in re-settlement process**", with special reference to the psychological, physical and sociological aspects. Study of 'dwelling' has to be base on a phenomenological approach. The study of act of dwelling is more of a qualitative experience than being quantitative, so it should take an epistemological approach to the study. In this respect "Dwelling" and "The act of dwelling" have been established in general, on its theoretical basis, as a general concept. The latter part of the study will be a case study approach, which would look into specific methods and principles.



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For the case study, one village from Galle district, which gone through the recent flooding, is identified. An in-depth study will be conducted using the **Sample Survey Method**. Interviews to be conducted in a face-to-face setting and some particular data may gather in form of plans, elevations and sections. Before going to the field, the interviewing method will preplanned, to conduct the interviews by adhering to a set of questionnaire (check list) in order to obtain particular information of the study.

In this respect, the researcher plays an important role in the study. The discoveries are exploratory, focused and generated through built forms, information, insights and understandings. Thus, the research would be looking at transformation of the generic form to individual dwelling units through personalization that could be identified physically and socially and how it can influence the peoples', social and psychological attribute to a home.

## • SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Only the local examples were selected for the case studies, which have been recently affected by flood in Galle district.

Due to time constraints only one village will be selected for the in-depth study. So it becomes a limitation in arriving to some conclusions.

And there will be many assumptions due to the fact that the re-settlement process has been recently done and the long-term results cannot be discussed.

The study will be focussed on the individual housing units and therefore the re-settlement theories & aspects will not be discussed in details.



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In the case of considering only flood prone areas, the social issues related to many other disaster situations may not be examined.

The study may mainly focus only on social and psychological attributes and least consideration will be given on physical attributes. So it may carry limitations.

**Its scope is limited to psychological attribute of personalization, of act of dwelling and the associated physical and socio-spatial factors.**

Perception of dwelling begins, on the more tangible physical settings, which are given symbolic meanings by the people whose life happens in such settings overtime. Observing such a situation by a "Third person" therefore carry a limitation, as it is almost impossible for such a person to align himself in this dynamic process.

To overcome the communication and language problems and to facilitate the smooth flow of discussions, the help of a "third person" was vital. This situation carry a limitation, and the strength of an idea can be reduced while it transfers via the third person.

